

10/3/11 - Monday, October 3, 2011

**CITY OF EAU CLAIRE
PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES**

Meeting of October 3, 2011

City Hall, Council Chambers, 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Messrs. Levandowski, FitzGerald, Hibbard, Larson, Strobel, Duax, Pearson

Staff Present: Messrs. Tufte, Noel, Amundson, Genskow

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Levandowski.

1. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CZ-1115) “ Cell Tower, 2805 Bauer Street

Mr. Tufte presented the withdrawal request from AT&T Mobility.

There was no opposition at the public hearing.

Mr. Duax motioned to accept the withdrawal. Mr. FitzGerald seconded and the motion carried.

2. DISCUSSION/DIRECTION

A. Downtown Street/Riverfront

Mr. Amundson presented plans and perspectives for the preferred alternative for downtown streets and potential riverfront and library improvements. The past nine months have shaped how the plans have evolved. The City Council, in May 2011, voted to make South Barstow Street into a two-way street. The street will be reconstructed along six downtown blocks. Three blocks of Eau Claire Street will also be reconstructed. Part of this street will not have curbs near the State Theater. The unique design allows for better pedestrian access and the ability to close the street to traffic for special events. He presented three alternatives for the Library/City Hall campus (a town square design, more parking along Eau Claire Street, and Eau Claire as a through street). Concepts have not been finalized. The Riverfront walk section is curvilinear in design and shows a potential mixed-use redevelopment of adjacent private property. Plans show an amphitheater at Haymarket Square.

Mr. Strobel and Mr. Larson had questions about going to two-way streets.

Mr. Amundson explained the traffic engineering analysis indicated no compelling reason to keep one-ways and that two-ways are shown nationally to increase business exposure and reduce speeds. This is in line with the public™s top sentiments during the public meetings. That is, pedestrian accessibility and business exposure were rated highest. Reconfigurations will have to occur at the southern intersections of Graham and South Barstow with Washington, Marston, Newton and State streets. Parking differences along South Barstow were fairly close when comparing two-way verses one-way streets.

Commissioners discussed the various public spaces envisioned.

Mr. Amundson stated having these spaces designed early will indicate to developers the public™s preference. Funding would be more contingent on public-private partnerships, like what was accomplished at Phoenix Park. The riverwalk concept allows for both pedestrian and bicycle users, but it favors pedestrians since there is no connection south of Lake Street.

Mr. Stobel asked about the public involvement process and getting the downtown businesses more involved.

Mr. Amundson stated there have been multiple public informational meetings, and chances for the public to submit their comments online and in writing. The decisions made thus far have been largely driven by the general public and will continue to be as the project advances.

Mr. FitzGerald and Mr. Strobel liked the town square plan for the Library and City Hall.

Dan Goelzer, 214 & 216 South Barstow Street, stated the street planters are too close to the building walls. He prefers the one-way design because it is safer and new loading zones would take parking away. He said a public survey conducted downtown showed people favor one-ways two-to-one.

Lonnie Kolar, 1204 Raedel Road, thought one-way streets are better since two-way traffic calming will have the unintended effect of pushing traffic to Farwell Street. His business at Barstow and Graham Avenue would then be negatively impacted. He said he did not receive enough information on the project and the process should be slowed. He asked when Graham Avenue will be repaired.

Mr. Amundson stated Graham Avenue will have joint repair and signage improvements done, but full reconstruction is five to ten years out.

Sean Hartnett, 330 Gilbert Avenue, was in favor of two-ways streets. He wanted the Haymarket Square redevelopment concept to focus on incorporating more natural capital of riverbanks. He thought the area could be a great location for a world-class type of museum or cultural center.

B. Multi-tenant Signs

Mr. Tufte presented minor changes to a proposed sign code amendment dealing with wall signs in commercial districts. Signing plans for older multi-tenant buildings would now be required. The provisions add flexibility for placement, if the plan is approved by the Plan Commission.

Commissioners were in favor of setting up the public hearing and added that the Plan Commission should approve all such sign plans.

C. Waterways Plan Update

Mr. Tufte presented the updated draft of the Waterways Plan and explained what took place at the first advisory committee meeting. Additional comments were taken that will help modify the Discovery chapter. The next meeting is at RCU headquarters on October 13. At this meeting participants will discuss what existing things the City does should be kept and those that should be changed. The City™s Waterways and Park Commission was very pleased with the initial draft.

D. Code Compliance Items

None.

E. Future Agenda Items

Mr. Duax wanted to review the ordinance on downtown projecting wall signs so as to encourage more of this type of signage.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of September 19, 2011, were approved.

Thomas Pearson
Secretary